Demolition changes Paducah skyline

30 June 2015

The demolition of a former feed plant complex at Paducah site has dramatically changed the skyline of the former uranium enrichment site.

An excavator with a shear attachment prepares to remove a section of floor from the upper levels of the C-420 building (Image: DOE Office of Environmental Management)

The C-410/C-420 Feed Plant was built at the Kentucky site in 1956 to produce uranium hexafluoride (UF6) for enrichment, and stood in the centre of the gaseous diffusion enrichment plant. It operated until 1977, when the enrichment plant began receiving UF6 from other sources, such as Honeywell's Metropolis uranium conversion plant in Illinois. The plant, which also housed offices and a machine shop, had an original footprint of some 20,000 square metres and its tallest building was approximately 25 metres tall.

The structure was contaminated with asbestos and UF6. UF6-contaminated piping and equipment was removed or decontaminated ahead of the demolition itself. Demolition of the plant began with the manual removal of 2600 cement asbestos siding panels and over 2700 metres of piping before the building itself was demolished by large shear-equipped excavators. Steel and other debris will be cut into smaller pieces for shipment by rail to a commercial disposal site.

The demolition is being carried out on behalf of the US Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Environmental Management by LATA Kentucky.

Jennifer Woodward, Paducah site leader for the Office of Environmental Management, described the demolition of the plant, the last of 32 inactive facilities scheduled for removal, as an "exciting milestone" for the site. "Since 2004, we have safely removed 4,700 tons of waste related to the C-410/C-420 buildings complex", she noted.

The Paducah gaseous diffusion plant facilities themselves are now undergoing deactivation in preparation for their decontamination and decommissioning, after being formally handed back to DOE by the US Enrichment Corporation in October 2014.

Researched and written
by World Nuclear News